

august 1992¹

a paper for internal discussion

This presents my own view of how things stand at present in C.A.A. I don't intend any criticism of individuals within the group. In fact I regard personal criticism of individuals as not only irrelevant but misguided, it just indicates a lack of awareness of the real situation. I suppose this is a sort of 'over-view', an attempted analysis perhaps. Time is short as usual so other folk will find many and various points I've missed.

A campaigning charity like C.A.A. can work in at least two ways, a] official and b] unofficial:

a] "official" includes 'politics' as an accepted (acceptable) activity. When we speak about politics here we are speaking about mainstream politics where if you talk about somebody being 'left wing' then basically you're talking about people in the official Labour Movement: Labour Party MP's and Councillors; the STUC, TUC; the full time Trades Union officials and so on. In this 'official' context you can have a debate on whether or not somebody in the SDLP or the SNP happens to be 'more left wing' than some Labour Party members. This context allows us to talk about 'caring members of the Tory party'; 'caring members' of the DSS, 'good policemen', 'good lawyers' or 'good doctors'.

Under a]-style politics we do parliamentary-style business: eg we petition or lobby Parliament or District/Regional councils, we talk directly to MP's and Councillors; introduce motions like the *Asbestos Charter* etc. We spread information and knowledge to these party politicians and other professional individuals (civil servants, other officials, doctor, lawyers), pushing them reports on the latest asbestos and general hazard research, the latest medical research. We send them reports on the cases of individual victims and their individual struggles, trying to show the general problems though letting them read up on difficult claims like cases 8, 33, 36; 5, 31, 2

¹ We were also showing a need to call an Emergency General Meeting of members to convey to them the reality - what I saw as the severity of the situation, that really, it was desperate. I intend this to be read and considered alongside the two papers produced by A., both the Charter and the earlier proposal he had submitted for forward planning.

and so on.

We stay in communication with individuals who are in a position to influence what we might call 'natural justice'. These include - beside MPs and Councillors - different trades unions officials at their HQ or ordinary branch level; also the managers and bosses in the DSS, Special Medical Board and SSAT system; the Law Society, British Medical Association & General Medical Council and the Secretary of State, the Minister at the DSS; the Lord Advocate, the Procurator Fiscal; various doctors and pathologists etc.; all the different people and agencies on our 'CC' mail-out list.

At the same time we try to get them to give us support on single issues like the obligatory CT Scan for all workers at risk; the establishment of a Hospice for terminally-ill victims; the funding and coordination of proper research on the subject; getting rid of biopsies on asbestos-disease suspects; attempting to get the diagnostic criteria on prescribed diseases altered as well as extending the set of asbestos-related prescribed diseases to include all the different ones that actually do exist, as opposed to what the state (insurers and asbestos-industry) say exist for official purposes.

And really there are only two prescribed diseases when it comes down to it; asbestosis and Bilateral Diffuse Pleural Thickening (BDPT). Any mesothelioma or asbestos-induced lung cancer victim can be beat for a diagnosis by the DSS doctors if the victims dont show evidence of either interstitial pulmonary fibrosis or BDPT (and BDPT when diagnosed doesn't even get a percentage for disablement because the doctors say it doesn't cause any 'loss of function!').

In this a] "official" category we also try to get the politicians, the doctors and the lawyers, to help lobby for changes in Scots Law (eg. the Effect on Death on Damages), and also to some extent the Law in England and Wales on other points, besides seeking Commissioner's Rulings in the off chance we can effect changes through precedent.

Then we try and make use of the various mainstream media, communicating directly and establishing contact with radio, tv and newspapers, magazines and journals, sending press releases, writing articles and features, gaining publicity, press conferences etc.

Also we try to spread our network and maintain our communications system with like-minded individuals and groups both at home and abroad, not just groups with an interest in the asbestos issue but occasionally on hazards in general. We are in

contact with people in USA, Australia, South Africa, Europe, India etc. We try to make contact with civil rights campaigners, and other humanitarian bodies and agencies again both at home and abroad, including official places like Strasbourg or Brussels, using MEP's etc., the EEC, World Health Organisation.

We offer advice and support to community action groups and workers on health & safety issues at home, elsewhere in the UK and also abroad. We have meetings and establish personal contacts occasionally within the Social Works Dept., or the DSS and SSBA and also with outside welfare rights officers and the medical and legal profession; with official agencies like the Health and Safety Executive.

We do other kinds of lobbying with general hazards campaigning groups (HAZARDS) and sympathetic bodies like OILC; we try to turn up to things like the East End Management meetings, and occasional seminars and conferences (at universities and elsewhere), distributing leaflets and giving talks, running workshops, having meetings with the STUC etc.

The monitoring work we do on asbestos use and abuse means giving information on hazard dangers to anyone who inquires, especially workers, also to official agencies (schools etc.) involved in new buildings (Celtic FC) or stripping and removal work; and community involvement ranging from helping get somebody a new house² to being called out to Barlinnie Prison to monitor a removal job. It means contact with ordinary members of the public and with pressure groups and campaigns in local communities, advising and supporting and generally giving them the benefit of our experience.

Then there is the day-to-day office management, the treasurer's work and the basic general secretarial work; from taking phone calls to improving the 'filing system'. Also writing letters or making phone calls on behalf of individual victims; speaking up for them when they have to face doctors and lawyers and other officials, trying to stop them being killed from the operation table through having to undergo a biopsy, getting them referred for CT scans etc.

Then we have the different other 'counselling' services and the general information gathering and dissemination of knowledge and currently available research that we manage to obtain from all over the world etc. And we offer a drop-in centre; do home visits, attend funerals; give other welfare rights advice, plus the

² Mrs Fitzimmons, through Ian and others

psychological support of victims. This can never be underestimated; ultimately the most important support is the kind that comes from people in the same boat as themselves, i.e. other victims.

And of course we advise and prepare individual claims and appeals right the way through the DSS bureaucratic system, trying to keep up to date on all the current legislation and procedure. We try also to advise and support individual victims with the legal profession right the way through their civil actions on compensation etc.

In order to do what we do we have to spend time learning the ropes. The voluntary workers have to become lay-experts in the field before they can function even semi-independently, having to learn all the different issues and aspects of these issues, eg. the medical and legal side of things etc. And at the moment this crucially essential part of the day-to-day work is being greatly underestimated and undervalued.

In this a] "official" category there are the fund raising concerns: the applications and approaches to all the different councils and statutory bodies; trades unions, agencies and charities and sympathetic individuals. Plus obtaining material benefits and other things like reduced rents and rates and reduced telecom, gas and electricity charges. And the buying or otherwise acquiring cheap office furnishings and fittings (including computers) and all kinds of stationery; getting cheap services like photocopy engineers etc. Fund raising also means expanding our membership; seeking block enrolments from groups and individual union branches, perhaps other charities. It means seeking donations and trying to organise fund-raising ventures; sticking a collection box and/or tea-jar into a place where visitors and members can get the chance of putting in a few coins occasionally for all the tea and coffee consumed; and discussing things like running concerts or dances or jumble sales or selling books etc.

The above are many of the things and the activities C.A.A. are involved in currently and there will be others that I have forgotten to list or maybe don't know about since unfortunately we don't always know what each other is doing. As will be appreciated it is quite a large area of involvement.

At the beginning I spoke about the 'official' politics. It seems to me that none of the above activities can be classified as "being political" in the sense where C.A.A. - as

it presently exists - is in open confrontation with the political authorities, not unless there came about some hard, right wing crack-down from the state/government. At the moment this is unlikely since there is no need. None of the activities above endanger the group's status nor put it at risk of losing their premises; nor should these activities threaten what little "official" donations, funds and grants that we actually get (never mind the ones we continually try for but don't get).

The politics of what we are about do not threaten the authorities in the sense that no matter how awkward things get for them by what we are doing within this a) "official" category, no matter how 'embarrassed' or 'ashamed' we make them, they can still handle - and remain in control of - the situation.

In other words we are not being political in a way that threatens the actual system itself. In this a) "official" category we are always working (and being seen to be working) within the system; we are acting through the proper and generally orthodox political channels. We offer no real threat to the Council or the Region or to Parliament; nor do we truly threaten the STUC and full time union leaders, nor truly threaten any MP's, Councillors and other professional politicians. Nor do we offer any real threat to the status quo via the DSS and the medical and legal professions.

All of the above, as far as I can see, keeps us safely within the Constitution; in fact it can maybe be said that as far as C.A.A. exists at the present time its members have adopted the 'constitutional approach'. Essentially this is how we operate.

The main work that we have never engaged in fully is what I've described as the b) "unofficial" category, which is essentially the unofficial side of the political business or what we might describe as the real politics. It is ironic, speaking personally, that when I became involved with C.A.A. back in the spring of 1991, it was only this kind of support work that I intended doing. For the past ten or so months (it is the 30th August 1992 as I write) individual casework, a form of welfare rights, has become the main burden of my work, in fact it's just about all I do.

The CAA group was formed to support and counsel victims. I have to elaborate now about the particular work that I do in the office, my 'specialty'.

It is described as 'counselling'. I represent the claims and appeals of victims as they try to obtain the disablement allowances to which they are entitled from the Department of Social Security. From these individual cases - either at '1st rejection'

stage, or at the 'Appeal to the Commissioner' stage - I occasionally prepare fuller reports on individual cases. These are designed to make general arguments that can be sent 'CC' to the various official individuals, bodies and agencies referred to earlier on. This work means you have to become a fairly knowledgeable lay-person on the subject of asbestos-related diseases. In passing it should be said that acquiring knowledge and information on the subject is never straightforward, as we all know, there is a dearth of such material available to the ordinary public. The British State, the insurers, the asbestos-industry, the Government and a few other bodies much prefer it that way.

In order to qualify for their legal entitlements from the DSS the victims must prove firstly that they have such a disease and secondly that they contracted this disease while engaged in their employment; i.e. they must prove they have an industrial disease. Sometimes the stages are reversed and victims must prove they could have contracted a particular disease through the workplace; once they prove this they then prove they have the disease.

When their claim is rejected the next stage in the process is an Appeal against the DSS decision. This means preparing individually for each one, each and every individual victim's occupational history, his/her potential exposure to asbestos within that industry, then their individual medical records and the current medical evidence (i.e. any new medical reports). We may have as many as 5 to 7 Appeals per week. On top of these are all the claims that are still at the 1st stage of going in front of the Special Medical Board.

I'm not going to speak about the "specialty", individual work others do in the office. Not just because that would be presumptuous but because I don't know exactly what other people do, and they probably don't know precisely what I do either - even after I've just explained it!. So I've outlined my own work here only to give an idea of what one voluntary worker's "specialty" job amounts to. And it should be pointed out that I receive great support and much assistance from others in the office.

Like everybody else I am also engaged in other aspects of the general work and activities, a little of this and a little of that. But around 98% of what I'm involved in I would list under the 'constitutional approach', within the a] "official" category. As far as I can see (though maybe some would disagree) every other CAA worker is also engaged in this 'constitutional' work.

I have to say immediately that the only reason I consider the casework on claims and appeals important is because it offers immediate support to victims both physically and psychologically. But having said that it is not necessarily work that I personally would choose to be doing. In fact much of it, right at this very minute, should be done from within statutory agencies relating to the Social Services. It should not be done by a charity like C.A.A. at all, as far as I can see. (CAA could still be engaged in individual casework but in a different capacity, as a back-up and support group offering advice, assistance and information etc. to victims, maybe also to the welfare rights people and the other agencies that should be involved directly, as a statutory duty.

As a way ahead for the general good of asbestos victims this 'constitutional' approach that we're involved in may lead to fundamental change in the system. There again it may not. Who can say? Certainly not me. I think I shall be long dead before a reasonable enough time-span has elapsed that would allow such a judgment. This is my opinion. In other words whether or not this 'constitutional approach', i.e. us operating a] official, within the system, will ever work for the general good of asbestos victims is so long-term that we'll all be dead before we find out.

That was how I saw the 'constitutional approach' when I first lent support to C.A.A. It is still how I see it. As far as I recollect I haven't revised my opinion in any way. Nor, during the past 18 months engagement at CAA have I learned anything new in that one respect, i.e. the political reality of 'changing the system from within'.

One thing we must be clear about of course is that when we speak about the major 'enemy' of asbestos-victims we aren't really speaking about the DSS, we are speaking about the British Government and/or the British State. The DSS is only a government department, the Department of Social Security.

And maybe we should make a distinction here between the British State and the British Government. Governments may come and go but the State remains the same. In this context when we speak about the defenders of the asbestos-industry and insurers etc. we are speaking about the British State.

The struggle of asbestos-victims is both against the government and against the state. The government acts on behalf of the state. You might describe the government as the state management team. In this sense we can look upon the state as an

enormous business corporation that employs a management team (the government) to make sure everything runs smoothly. Through a multi-layered chain of command the government-management helps to make sure that state-business interests are looked after. Strategy, tactics, policy and so on are employed both by the state and by its government (which includes Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition; the Labour Party, SNP et al).

Major shareholders in the asbestos, shipbuilding, construction, banking or insurance industry etc. are direct or indirect members of the state. Often these people are not allowed to be members of the government because the conflict of interest is acknowledged. As we know, somebody like Ian Lang³ for instance apparently has to resign his Lloyd's involvement in order to hold government office, although a Name remains liable three years after his/her resignation as far as we know. But as in the case of a previous Secretary of State, George Younger, once Ian Lang leaves government he is free to pick up where he left off, and resume being a major shareholder in anything he likes. And in the act of doing this he is also taking up or resuming his position within the state. Younger is a top man within the Royal Bank of Scotland (besides his other directorships) and he therefore holds a consultative and highly influential position within the state hierarchy.

A great many of these people just seem to take their turn in working for the government. Maybe they see it as a duty to their peer-group. They do this work on behalf of the British system, which exists to serve their own interests anyway. Like George Younger, Mr Lang will return to his 'state' function sooner or later. Perhaps he will resume his financial interest in asbestos-related business (as a Lloyd's 'Name' though given recent developments in the USA like the 'Baltimore Judgment', this is unlikely, unless he's a masochist).

The dual role of Ian Lang is an example of the deep rooted contradictions that are part and parcel of the way C.A.A. operates at present, its almost total commitment to the 'constitutional approach', the a] 'official' method I've been speaking about. In his Secretary of State position Lang holds the function of supreme arbiter of justice; the last 'court of appeal' for victims of asbestos (and any victim of the DSS etc.) Yet while out of government office he has a vested interest in seeking to deny justice to victims of asbestos, because he personally stands to lose money through his Lloyd's

³ Scottish Secretary of State at this period

connection.

Okay, this is a simplified breakdown of how I see things operating. I'm just trying to put into perspective what I see C.A.A. being up against in the struggle with the DSS and the law etc. in regard to civil action claims for compensation.

Now, as I have been saying, the C.A.A. at present conducts the struggle on behalf of victims within the mainstream and official channels that we see as available to us. We are devoting almost all of what little resources we have to this 'constitutional approach'.

It needs to be said that at least half of the volunteer workers are not as far as we know victims of asbestos. They are supporting the victims in their struggle. But these non-victim voluntary workers, like the victim voluntary workers, are an essential resource of C.A.A.

It is my opinion (and I may be wrong) that without both the victim and non-victim voluntary workers the C.A.A. would close down. It is possible other volunteers would try to take their place. Up until the 1991 AGM this would have been possible. Nowadays it is not simply unlikely but I think impossible, no matter whether other volunteers came forward or not. C.A.A. could not continue its present very wide-ranging operation. Such a thing cannot be contemplated as far as I can see without an immediate teaching and education programme for potential volunteers. However, in view of the heavy workload that is already being carried out by the present volunteers, this is simply not feasible.

Some idea of the scale of such a learning programme can be gathered by studying what we are already doing and the knowledge, contacts, technical expertise and experience required for it.

For my part I am now forced to admit (in the words of the writer Franz Fanon): "Monsieur Ministre, there comes a moment when tenacity becomes morbid perseverance". What I am arguing is that for us to continue as we are at present is a bad idea and that if we continue as we are then it is little more than an excuse not to face up to reality and what the actual situation really amounts to. Again, obviously, I may be wrong. It's how I have seen things for the past 6 weeks or so - at least since around the time Mr A----- introduced his forward plan.

The failure rate of claims for asbestos-related disease is of course astonishingly high (in the West of Scotland at least 88% of all claims on asbestosis are rejected by

the DSS medical authorities). What I felt on finishing the case of -----⁴ was not simply the inadequacy of continuing to work in the way I've been working. It was the inadequacy of the entire 'constitutional approach'.

And on a personal level I had to ask why I was coming to a conclusion that I had arrived at before I came, a conclusion that had brought me to lend support to C.A.A. in the first place!

Here you had a man diagnosed mesothelioma while alive, and mesothelioma actually registered as the cause of his death. Yet still the DSS rejected his widow's posthumous claim for back-dated disability allowances in respect of the industrial disease that he died from. The DSS medical authorities rejected the claim on a diagnostic position first formulated by Dr A----, a chest specialist who does consultative work for the 'independent' Medical Appeal Tribunal service. In fact this so-called 'independently' suggested ,alternative diagnosis is, almost word-for-word, the same as that presented as the Secretary of State's submission against the widow. (I feel like repeating that last sentence word for word.)

We do have an outside chance of 'winning' this case (to be heard in two days' time as I write). We have done almost everything possible within the official channels.⁵ Yet finally, whether we 'win' this case or not, will depend on the good will of the Government. This because the DSS can award us the claim or not. It is entirely up to them. They can beat us if they so desire.

C.A.A. can learn even from this one single case. Yet the paradox is that what we learn is something we already know, or should know, that the state is the enemy of asbestos victims (and victims of industrial disease in general). Its government does what it can in order to 'beat' the victims. The government does this on behalf of the state, it protects the interests of its employers. It even causes the premature deaths of victims, in other words the DSS bureaucratic and legal processes actually kill victims before their time - not to mention the horrific suffering these institutions forces onto victims and their families - in order to achieve its objective.

The crazy thing is that we know this even as we work. Yet because of the way we function at C.A.A., through our 'constitutional approach', this knowledge of the

⁴ case no. 8

⁵ We lost the case and appealed to the Commisioner; I had left CAA before the result came through.

actual reality becomes redundant, it becomes irrelevant information. What good does it do knowing the state is the enemy if we continue playing the game by the rules laid down by the state in the first place? We are playing the game by the enemy's rules and we also know that this enemy has the power to make up the rules as it goes along, which it does whenever it feels a need. Look at what they did with the Compensation Recovery Unit.

One of the first things a new worker has to do in C.A.A. is learn to stop saying 'the system's shit' while at the same time finding positive ways of operating within it. I think everybody would agree there. All I'm saying at this stage is that it isn't enough to say 'the system's shit'; that doesn't help anybody, you've got to actually do things. People come into the office and sit about doing fuck all except saying 'The system's shit'. The trouble is though, because of this 'constitutional approach', all we're really offering them is a chance to work within the system. It's crap.

We have to examine things a bit more. To what extent is how we operate a valid procedure on behalf of victims? Is this really the way we should be working? Should we be asking committed people to start operating within the system? Once we have asked ourselves this kind of question here in the office then we have to take it out and start raising the same sort of question with the entire membership.

Each and every victim who walks through the office door knows that 'the system's shit' and that it's out to do them in. They don't need us or anybody else to tell them, not when it's them being killed by the fucking thing.

But what do we tell them? What do we actually say to the victims? What is our approach? As I see it, it's a variation on what we would tell a potential voluntary worker at present: in other words, when an asbestos victim comes through the office door and says 'the system's shit' we say Yes, but we'll help you beat it, or at least we'll have a good go.

Even worse than that, we tell the victims just leave the fight to us! Not in so many words, but this is what it amounts to. I'm arguing that this is a nonsensical thing to do. Not only nonsensical but arrogant. And a terrible waste of resources.

When I'm talking about 'resources' here I'm talking about human resources. The actual membership itself. This group should operate as a self-help group. One crucial aspect of a group such as this, with or without charitable status, is that we operate as a self-help body of people. Yet the way things are just now this is only true

to a very minimal degree. Again we have the hang-over from an old way of working, where information was withheld deliberately. One reason this happened is because people are encouraged by the system to feel like they're in competition with each other, to get their benefit or compensation. That attitude is no longer part of the group which is something that is maybe overlooked when we look at some of our current success, in fact it's a crucial thing to this success that we try and share our knowledge, information and experience. It's difficult because of the time factor but we do try. But it won't improve unless we get our priorities right. I'll come back to this later.

Of course using the word 'success' can only be done with caution. This is because, as I think everybody would agree, the situation in C.A.A. is now critical. In the space of under a year, at the most since the new committee was formed in late spring 1991, the Clydeside Action on Asbestos group has changed; it has changed radically and I would say irrevocably, that it cannot go back to the way it was. Even if some people thought it would be a good idea - better than nothing at all - then I'm saying it wouldn't be possible. The network now established by C.A.A. along with its integrity and credibility are at a level that cannot be tampered with. New people couldn't even answer the letters and keep up with the general correspondence let alone anything else.

Although this is hypothetical I would argue that not even the old ways could creep back into practice, if the current committee and voluntary workers were to go the entire thing would close down. Nobody could handle it from nothing. There couldn't be a total clear out and a totally new beginning. Not even with the benefit of the current filing and other systems we have. Another "C.A.A." could maybe arise in the foreseeable future but it would have to more or less reconstitute itself and become a new C.A.A. altogether. So much so that should such a hypothetical situation ever arise then the new people would not only want to change the name of the group, they would feel forced to change it. They just couldn't cope with what the present C.A.A. would leave them. They would have no choice but to somehow disassociate themselves from the work that has been done during the past year and particularly during the past 6 - 9 months. A 'new C.A.A. would function in an entirely different manner. New aims and objectives altogether, its entire range of working knowledge, experience and expertise - all of that would alter fundamentally. Bla bla.

I was thinking along these lines (when A. introduced his forward plan), on the

difficulties that would arise once C.A.A. started getting proper and adequate funding. No matter that this would act as a real force to keep us on the a] official, the 'consitutional' style operation, the fundamental problems would come about because, no matter how much money we get and/or what control we manage to keep over what we do, how is all this money to be spent? The difficulty to do with paying wages to some people while others get nothing is surely obvious.

Once a person is paid a living wage and others aren't but are still being relied upon, then the situation will become very difficult indeed, perhaps untenable. What voluntary worker, for example, will continue working a 12 or 16 hour day when the paid worker works to the 9 - 5 clock?

I believe we must alter our approach radically. I don't think we have any choice in the matter. We cannot retain good workers on these government con-things because they must move on when the opportunity arises, they've got no choice. Not only can we not retain good workers like them we cannot retain the rest of us, the voluntary workers, because of other obligations, none of us can be taken for granted really, except those of us who are asbestos victims.

And speaking personally I now have to fulfil other obligations. I need to earn my dough. Doing C.A.A. work is a luxury that I need to be allowed to afford, so I've got to leave for that reason alone. It is no one's 'fault'. Neither mine nor anybody else's. I took on the commitment willingly and don't regret a single minute of it.

Money and economics generally will always get in the way of a campaigning group and the problem has to be tackled. Whether it can be overcome is another matter. But it has to be at least acknowledged as a problem, because of the divisive affect it has on the workers. These 2 hour discussions we have about toilet paper and tea-bags cannot be avoided. Such disputes may seem petty but at root they aren't petty at all. But whatever, these and other money-worries just serve to drain people's energy and enthusiasm.

The reason why I say these disputes aren't petty is because that is what they do, they drain people's energy and enthusiasm and make us want to toss in the towel- which suits the authorities down to the ground, that's why we don't get proper funding.

The fact must also be faced that many of the asbestos-victims who are being assisted, supported and helped by CAA are on a much better rate of weekly income than most of the volunteers. No volunteer is in there for the money and no volunteer

would dream of raising such murky matters. I'm raising these murky matters because I'm not one of the badly off volunteers and therefore don't feel at all embarrassed about doing so. At the moment money isn't a problem for myself. But it is a problem for others. And there is no question that if I was in their position I would start resenting different things, because of the size of the 'constitutional' workload I faced, while other CAA members who have better weekly incomes sit around doing nothing much apart from shouting about the system being shit and otherwise enjoying the crack. We've got to be able to talk about these things. Folk who are a part of C.A.A. and like myself are not badly affected by financial worries, must go out of their way to understand the problems eg. when the voluntary workers (victims and non-victims) are actually doing work on behalf of people who have much better incomes.

At least that's my opinion and I think the matter must be brought to the surface, both within the office and also with the membership at large who must be told the truth and face up to whatever consequences there are. If not the resentments will mount and mount till they become intolerable. An idea of this can be seen from the murky matter of expenses. The 'highest earners' in the office are the government-job people because the broo pays them £40 expenses per month whereas CAA only manages to afford the others £25. That speaks for itself! Surely one thing a self-help group must do is ensure its regular workers aren't exploited! If the DSS recognises these people need £10 a week expenses then we know that's the absolute limit they can be exploited for, but we are saying we can go even lower! It's genuine ignorance that causes it but ignorance can only be an excuse for so long (it's no excuse within the law unless you can show 'good cause') otherwise people will get sickened and just leave. We begin by raising it and not being too embarrassed to discuss it further.

It's up to the victim and non-victim workers to tell the membership of the problem. When the membership as a whole start to look at the reality of the situation they might come up with suggestions on how things can operate practically. Both this attempted 'over-view' along with A.'s forward plan plus whatever comes out of another internal meeting on the subject, can be submitted as the basis for that sort of honest and very basic discussion. At the moment the membership of C.A.A. is exploiting its voluntary workers but they are genuinely ignorant of the fact. This is also because the majority of the membership are in ignorance of what the victim and non-victim volunteer workers actually do.

It is up to us to let them know. Otherwise we are just playing games. We have to stop telling them we can do the business if they just leave us to get on with it. The truth is that we can't do the business. And we aren't coming clean about the reality of the problems we faced yesterday never mind the 101 things we've got to face tomorrow.

Again I have to stress that there is no blame being attached to any of us. There are very few charitable campaigning groups that can do the business. Most of them are just cons, they only exist to pay the high heid-yin full-timers a nice sort of middle-class professional's wage.

What system of priorities can you operate when you deal with terminally ill people day in and day out. How can you tell a terminally ill person that his case is not even a second or third priority. How do you tell terminally ill people that you need their support and solidarity to continue the fight?

The victims of asbestos are up against the full force of the British State and anyone who says they can do the business on behalf of these people is living in some sort of naive dreamworld.

It is time to call on the members. It is time to ask for support and solidarity from those sympathetic to the struggle. Personally I don't think we have any choice in this matter. I repeat that I see Clydeside Action on Asbestos on the point of collapse unless we change radically, and money is not the answer. The workers are tired and close to burn-out. Or am I wrong and seeing things too much from my own point of view?

Maybe one hang-over from the old way of working - before the 1991 AGM - still occupies too much of our time: seeking financial compensation for victims (looking for the loopholes and all that stuff) instead of seeking justice. My own "specialty" role of 'acting-Counsellor' is of course one such 'hang-over'; I spend most of my time seeking financial entitlements for the victims from the DSS. The secretary's involvement centres on this side of it as well.

But the state and its network (government, medical and legal authorities) force

us to see financial compensation and justice as the same thing. Of course they aren't, but too much of the office's workload is structured on that loose assumption. If financial compensation was the only thing then nobody would offer their services as a volunteer worker in the first place. And we wouldn't get so worked up by the fact that cases are always settled 'out-of-court'. The reason we get so worked up is because we know justice is therefore defeated.

As I say, statutory or official funding for C.A.A. is not necessarily the answer. If you take the view that this fight is against the state then it would inspire a fresh load of problems and contradictions. And we have examples from other walks of life. What it comes down to is this, can we really expect the state authorities to fund us in order to strengthen our fight against them?

And if we did get £50,000, or £500,000 per year, what would we do with it, even if for argument's sake we were allowed full control. Would we employ full-time workers? Who am I talking about when I say 'we'? How would this 'we' work out the wage-bill? Who would 'we' pay? How would these decisions be taken? How much would this 'we' have to spend in order to work out the wage-bill? Who would keep the accounts to show the money was spent properly? Would a volunteer Treasurer feel equipped to do this job? Or would 'we' have to hire a new Treasurer? Or else pay an accountant or some other financial adviser? Would anybody feel resentful that such a person (an outside accountant) was receiving a fee for that financial advice? Would any other jobs require waged workers? Which ones? Which jobs would 'we' decide were crucial enough to get paid? Whose jobs? What jobs! Nobody in there has a job anyway. Who would work out what the job descriptions for the work require doing? Bla bla bla.

So obviously the whole notion of paid workers takes this charity into an entirely different area of involvement. It may be a valid way forward at this moment in time. Who knows? That sort of structural, fundamental question is a matter for the membership. The only thing I'm saying is that it would totally transform the group as we know it. For a start you might find those non-victim volunteers who are involved at present through straight socio-political solidarity would be less inclined to offer their services. The victims of asbestos also have to face the fact that there are other victims in this society, and these struggles are to that extent always relative as far as I can see. I've used the example of the struggle facing black people in this country to indicate there can be

other methods of campaigning that we haven't tried but may be more appropriate than how we operate at present. There is nothing crucially, essentially and fundamentally unique about the nature of the struggle facing victims of asbestos. It isn't enough to say that people are being contaminated through no fault of their own.

So 'adequate' funding would certainly transform C.A.A. but not necessarily for the best. And we should be looking for examples of where this has happened before and what the effects have been, and whether or not the places that got this 'adequate' funding are still in operation. And if they aren't in operation then why? It is likely that with this 'adequate' funding it would become another orthodox type charity with its necessary quota of paid workers and its necessary quota of as many unpaid voluntary workers as possible. It wouldn't have to be as bad as the likes of the Salvation Army where more than 60% of its total income goes on the wage-bill and the day-to-day expenses of just actually running the operation. But there is one thing that happens in these sorts of operations, it's the paid workers who make the decisions that matter. That's why these workers get paid.

And like I said, when these 'adequately' funded operations - whether national, district or regional - get their funding withdrawn they usually just close the doors for good and the paid workers move to another 'cause' to make their crucial decisions, and the voluntary workers scratch around, because unlike the C.A.A.'s of this world, these funded operations lose the knack of operating on fresh air; and they lose the necessary integrity and political credibility that inspire non-victim volunteers and sympathisers to come forward and show their solidarity and support.

There is at least one alternative way to go instead of through the orthodox funding process. The way I see this is just to develop the 'unconstitutional approach' in a much stronger way than is being done at present. When I spoke of informing the members of the real situation at C.A.A. I didn't mean that we were wanting them to dig deep to pay the volunteer workers wages or otherwise fund the day-to-day running operation of the office.

Earlier I was describing our 'constitutional approach' under the a] "official" category.

What I see as the b] category, the "unofficial", *takes for granted the political reality of the struggle*. This alternative 'unconstitutional approach' does not see the

official Labour Movement as left wing at all. You might get committed individuals within it but basically groups and bodies like the Labour Party and the STUC give assistance to the authorities to stop any real change taking place in the structure of society. The various leaderships have seldom done more than pay lip-service to issues on the health and safety of the workers. Nobody would disagree with that. This is proved even by the fact that we worry about 'being political' because it might mean us not getting grants and donations from these different bodies who are supposed to be 'left wing', i.e. the various groups and bodies that come under the heading of Official Labour Movement.

The more genuinely political we are the less support we'll get from these constituted bodies. If we are truly aware we'll take it for granted where the real fight lies, and we'll recognise the hypocrisy of the official Labour Movement, at least as far as its various leaderships are concerned. The actual structure of bodies like the Labour Party, the party-machine, means that the genuinely committed people will be weeded out before they reach the higher offices.

Within the a] 'official' group we are obliged to speak to these bodies and individuals as though they are on the side of the victims where it truly matters. And they aren't; not where it truly matters. The 'constitutional approach' gives us little chance of addressing these matters properly; it is very difficult to force the politicians to do what they should be doing (and often say they are doing). But by a different approach we might yet embarrass and shame them sufficiently to act. We've seen the STUC's power amongst the various trades union when one letter by a high official produced quite a big response from the rank and file branches (but, we suspect, at a time when it suited him politically to do so; and as we know, they still employ the same lawyer we've had the difficulty over with Pat M and others).

The political action needed to address the real issues surrounding asbestos and asbestos abuse are only succeeding when the hypocrites are feeling threatened. Perhaps to some extent we have achieved a fair bit of this which is why we are beginning to get some response from people who usually give us a deaf ear.

We have been 'walking the line' on occasion in regard to 'being political' within the a] "official" category. All the 'CC' list, the different authorities who receive our various hazard reports and information, as well as those who receive our casework studies on the plight of individual victims won't enjoy getting them. It means they are

forced to be reminded of reality.

They probably even feel threatened by the fact that we regard them as important enough to send them these reports and casework studies in the first place. It means they are not anonymous, their heads are not down as much as they would like, they are too exposed. By sending them this battery of reports and research and casework studies we are telling them that we know who they are and that we know they have the power to help the victims at least slightly.

I'm referring here to just about everybody from the Lord Advocate through the Secretary of State, from full-time trades union officials down to the local District Councillor, from the Chief Adjudication Officer or top MAT Chairman down to the lowliest SSBA clerical worker whose name we've managed to capture.

Besides the way we've managed to achieve this while more or less staying within the bounds of the orthodox 'constitutional approach' we've also done well with the spate of media publicity. This is mainly down to concentrated work from A. and others involved in straight research; perhaps he and them alone are able to evaluate the support they've received although it scarcely needs repeating that no one person is responsible for everything in this office.

We can even manage to stay within the a] "official" left category when we publish in journals like *Blow Out*, *Newsline*, *The Socialist Worker*, *Militant* etc. or enlist support from fringe parties like the SWP, Militant, RCP etc. But it's borderline stuff and sometimes will fall into the risky, 'unconstitutional' side because the 'official left' hate them and are always looking for ways to write people like us off through such associations. One of their main ways to do this is to say that it isn't the victims that we're interested in helping, it's all down to some mysterious 'politics' etc.

Again in this respect our involvement with community campaign groups, going to speak at their public meetings etc., our known views on the HAZARD conferences

and so on, all of this is similar but needs to be stepped up - close to the edge but it's okay. We manage it by being very cautious; preparation and homework, watching our back etc. But maybe we're watching our back too much.

The authorities (whether right or mainstream left) don't like this sort of activity but are powerless to stop it. We move over the edge and fall into the b] "unofficial" category, when we become 'unconstitutional', when we start making statements and assertions that a 'legal adviser' would worry about. In other words, if by some stretch

of the imagination we had a lawyer supporting us then part of the lawyer's job would be to ensure that we're steering clear of things like defamation or *sub judice* stuff. So some of what we do is already over the edge (remember the guy from *Blow Out* worrying about some of what we might want to publish? He was quite right!).

So there is a 'grey area' where it is hard to say that one particular thing is 'constitutional' or otherwise. I would give as a quick example of this from the stuff I've personally been involved in, that first *Blow Out* article and the wee bits we published in the *Keelie*, and the little essay of mine that comes out in a couple of weeks' time. Others in the office can give their own examples. The wee piece in the Celtic fanzine is an obvious example.

But this kind of b] style "unofficial" category stuff is not a problem as long we exercise caution. Doing a thing anonymously or else signing your own name to things to distance yourself from the office (instead of signing it from C.A.A.) is an obvious cautionary tactic. C.A.A. workers have to distinguish between "official" and "unofficial", between the "constitutional" and the "unconstitutional" approaches. When in doubt consider it 'unofficial' and distance the office: don't speak for the office as if you represent it.

In my own opinion it is because of this borderline and outright 'unconstitutional' approach that we have been succeeding to the extent that we have. The powers-that-be feel threatened, they don't want to see and hear the victims. They have responded basically in three ways, 1] ignoring us and hoping we'll eventually toss in the towel. 2] confronting us directly or indirectly eg. Simpson's reply on Tommy Nesbitt, Kelly's letter to the Scotsman, the Motherwell Councillor's letter to the Herald - far too many of these to list. 3] conceding some of what we are fighting for directly or indirectly eg the 'prescription' question on case 33 and the 'diagnosis' question, 'allowing us a dialogue' (SSBA manager, governor at Barlinnie Prison; the HSE, various professional politicians and others), the STUC letter recommending support on our behalf, the Clydebank premises etc.

This brings us to our untapped human resources and surely this must be developed immediately. The first thing is to bring the membership into everything and give them the chance to fight back, we have to let them know how we see the current situation at the office and how we see the overall struggle, the actual plight of the

victims in a system that we all agree is shit. What the members have to say about all of this and what they want to do about it is entirely up to them. But they should no longer feel, or be allowed to feel, that they are able 'to leave it to the voluntary workers'.

High on the priority list must be the development both of the borderline "official" work and the 'unconstitutional approach', which means more of a concentration on work that takes the political reality for granted eg direct political protest and demonstration, leafleting workers and the ordinary public, naming the names of individuals within the powers-that-be. This kind of work demands physical presence. In other words the members themselves have to take part, the actual victims. The non-victims cannot do it on their behalf. Even the non-victim voluntary workers can only show solidarity and give support.

As I said at the beginning, this is submitted to be there alongside the two reports (forward plan and charter) produced by A.; the three of these to form the basic analysis and over-view that can allow of a genuine discussion and eventual EGM commitment of some sort.

If I have to spell it out I'm talking about political action. We use what resources we have, which is mainly human and we go more for the b] unofficial route, we go up front with the membership and let them share the burden of the situation as it really exists. They know the system's shit anyway. So we start planning in ways that face up to the political reality. We don't play the game by the rules laid down by the state and the asbestos-industry. We use the knowledge and experience we have in this direction. The membership are well used to shopfloor politics. It's just reminding them that if they do want justice they'll have to do it themselves, they'll have to get out on that street and start picketing, protesting and demonstrating. Justice is on their side and there's a great many sympathisers out there waiting for a lead. But these sympathisers can't do it alone.

It doesn't mean all the stuff I outlined under a] 'official', the 'constitutional approach' doesn't get done. But the welfare rights work has to stop, and it has to stop soon; and I personally don't think we've got any choice. There's no way the old 'Counselling' system was working. Nothing personal here at all. It was an impossibility. At the same time we have to be positive about it. Obviously we have to make sure the victims don't suffer, and that they receive at least as good a service as C.A.A. provides. This means making sure the Social Works Dept doesn't fuck up in one way or another.

So the membership; the victims, plus the victim and non-victim volunteers (and sympathisers) have got to work out a real practical approach towards a solution. Easier said than done of course but we should at least have some proposals.

Most of the other stuff listed at the beginning has to continue; it's part and parcel of what C.A.A. is about. But it cannot continue at the expense of the other. The unrisky 'constitutional' stuff must work simultaneously with the risky alternatives. And this is just to face up to the real situation.

By 'risky' I'm just talking about the stuff that threatens the politicians and the official Labour Movement, i.e. we name names, we think about strikes, protests and demonstrations; public meetings and rallies, fly-posting, leafletting and the rest - hitting the hospitals and the factory gates, the DSS and the medical boards etc., calling for solidarity from the rank and file. We have so much support and sympathy in this direction that it really is time to consolidate and call on it. Then we can also talk about funding in this context, a different type of funding (the kind that we get already, only stepped up through having a clearer approach to what C.A.A. is about and can only be about).

Maybe from the E.G.M. we should move immediately for a Day of Action: a protest march and demonstration followed by a rally, with maybe a night event with guest speakers etc., mixing 'culture' and 'politics' (assuming, at least for the sake of argument, that we can separate the pair).